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MIDDLEBURY WOMEN AND THE RULES

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Sharon Smith
Frank Merriman

Middlebury Women and the Rules

In the present atmosphere of claims and counter-claims about the behaviors and attitudes of Middlebury women toward some of the college regulations for women, it was felt that a valid picture of what these attitudes and practices really are should be provided to underlie future discussions in this area. Accordingly, on February 16, 1966, a carefully drawn sample of 168 Middlebury women, very nearly equally distributed among the four classes, was asked to fill in the answers to a number of questions on a mimeographed ballot. (Full descriptions of the sampling method used and of other aspects of the experimental design are contained in Appendix II.)

SUMMARY

** 90% of the women polled in all four classes say the present restrictions for Senior women are excessive, and a full 73% want the college to let the Senior women manage independently their own sex and social lives.

** 85% call the present restrictions for the Juniors excessive, and 76% call them excessive for the Sophomores.

** The more time a girl spends at Middlebury, the less strongly she feels about seeing the rules kept by others. Freshman disapproval of rule-breakers, at 28%, 43%, 57%, and 63%, is vastly higher than the parallel figures for the Seniors of 2%, 13%, 10%, and 22%.

** 60% of the Senior women answer "yes" to the question, "have you ever been illegally in a man's dormitory or fraternity room?"

** Only 15% of the Seniors say they consistently sign out when they know they should.

** Over half the Seniors (54%) say they have at least once spent all or part of the night outside the dormitory without signing out.

** Over half of the Seniors say they have at least once signed out for a comparatively "proper" place knowing at the same time that they were going somewhere else.

Conformity to Rules

To find the extent to which Middlebury women behave in accordance with the women's dormitory rules, a set of four questions was asked about the respondant's own violations of specific rules:

Table I - Violations of the Rules*

			Fr	So	Jr	Se
D	Do you consistently sign out?	"No"	16%	45%	40%	85%
	Have you ever signed out for a comparatively "proper" place when you knew you were going somewhere else?	"Yes"	19%	39%	50%	52%
	Have you ever spent all or part of the night outside your domitory without permission and without signing out?	"Yes"	24%	33%	41%	54%
	Have you ever been illegally in a man's dormitory or fraternity room at Middlebury?	"Yes"	15%	51%	44%	60%

It is not surprising that these figures grow larger from Freshman to Senior year since, by the nature of the questions, they are cumulative. What is surprising is the way in which conformity to the rules breaks down from Freshman to Senior year.

It would appear that by the time they have reached the middle of their Senior year, over half the girls have broken each of these rules. Indeed, in the case of signing out, 85% admit to having broken the rule. It should be pointed out in the case of the 60% who say they have been illegally in a man's room, that several of them offered spontaneous comments like, "I just went up to help him with his luggage at vacation;" hence such figures should not be immediately assumed to represent sexual impropriety.

* The complete data from which these tables are abstracted will be found in Appendix I.

Tolerance of Rule-Breakers

Since the enforcement of these rules is partly dependent on social pressures from other women, it was thought important to measure the extent of tolerance of violations among the women. The figures follow:

Table II - Tolerance of Rule-Breakers

		Fr	So	Jr	Se
Would you disapprove of a Middlebury woman who does not consistently sign out?	"No"	72%	90%	89%	98%
Would you disapprove of a Middlebury woman who signed out for a comparatively "proper" place when she knew she was going somewhere else?	"No"	57%	80%	87%	87%
Would you disapprove of a Middlebury woman who spent the night outside the dormitory without signing out?	"No"	43%	53%	69%	90%
Would you disapprove of a Middlebury woman who spent the night or a portion of the day in a man's room?	"No"	37%	53%	67%	78%

(It should be noted that, unlike those of the previous table, these figures are not cumulative. That is, the respondent, whether Freshman or Senior, is stating her present disapproval or lack of disapproval.)

Here it is apparent that toleration for violators of these rules grows significantly from Freshman to Senior years. Even in the last two questions, where a majority of Freshmen say they would disapprove, 90% and 78% of Seniors say, in effect, that they would tolerate the rule-breaking. All this suggests a rather weak base of "social pressure" among upperclass women in support of the women's regulations.

Protection and Supervision

The respondents were given an opportunity to select one of four statements to describe the amount of protection and supervision they thought appropriate for each class of Middlebury women. The statements follow:

A: "Middlebury does not provide enough protection and supervision for the sex and social lives of its women students."

B: "With minor exceptions perhaps, the present amount of protection and supervision is about right."

C: "Women need some protection and supervision, but the present amount is excessive."

D: "Middlebury women are mature enough to have their own values and take care of themselves, and the college should make no attempt to protect and supervise their sex and social lives."

Symmetry suggested that an extreme conservative statement precede "A" to balance "D," but it proved impossible to formulate such a statement. Analysis of results showed it to be unnecessary.

Since the distributions of the responses from the four classes were quite similar and their differences insignificant, the table below is based on the full sample (minus a few who omitted all or part of the question).

Table III - Opinions on Protection and Supervision

As Applied To:	A	B	C	D
Freshmen	1%	61%	29%	9%
Sophomores	0%	24%	55%	21%
Juniors	0%	15%	48%	37%
Seniors	0%	10%	17%	73%

This table practically speaks for itself. Sixty-one percent of the respondents think that the safeguards are "about right" for Freshmen (the proportion of Freshman respondents who chose "B" was 55%). This fits with the comments of one Senior women: "Middlebury women (and men) are not mature. Most have been brought up without the need for much responsibility and do not develop it instantly upon reaching college." A Sophomore woman stated, "One's code of behavior is usually pretty well formed by the time he reaches college age, and if after one year a girl at Middlebury does not want to accept the suggested code, it should be up to her to decide accordingly. Fewer rules would be broken, and she would only be deciding her course in

future life, which she will have to decide after college, if not during it." Close to half the women feel that Sophomores and Juniors need some protection and supervision, but that the present amount is excessive. And finally, practically three-fourths of the women feel that Senior women are mature enough to have their own values and to take care of themselves, and that the college should make no attempt to protect and supervise their sex and social lives. As one Senior woman put it, "If only we were trusted! And considered a) rational, and b) in possession of both consciences and moral standards."

Another way to interpret Table III is to read the columns vertically, particularly columns "B" and "D." In column "B" ("About right") one sees percentages falling off very rapidly after the Freshman year, and in column "D" ("Mature") one sees a rapid rise from less than one in ten for Freshmen to nearly three in four for Seniors.

Still more information may be discovered in Table III. It may reasonably be postulated that anyone who would check sentence "D" ("mature") would also agree with at least the last part of sentence "C" (that the present amount of regulation is excessive). By adding columns "C" and "D" we can derive:

Table IIIa - Percent of Respondents who Think Present Regulations Excessive

As Applied To:	
Freshmen	38%
Sophomores	76%
Juniors	85%
Seniors	90%

Finally, it should be emphasized that the present restrictions as applied to the three upper classes have the support of only from 10% to 24% of the women students. One Senior woman wrote, "The main reason I would never disapprove of a woman infringing upon the rules is that rarely does it hurt anyone else, generally the individual knows what she is doing, and it really is no one else's business what she is doing with her time. Because a girl is in a man's room or at a fraternity house illegally, does not mean she is there for illicit purposes. Usually there is a less base or should I say more 'respectable' reason than illicit sex. I would attribute more to girls who break rules (largely because they are too restrictive) than a sex motive. A system of laws is necessary for a society, but it must be a system within which responsibility and individual thought can function. This is not true of Middlebury's rules. Were they more flexible and more reasonable I should not hesitate to obey them."

Conclusion

Middlebury women do not like the women's rules at Middlebury. Before they have completed their undergraduate careers, a majority (sometimes a very large majority) of them have broken each of the rules examined here. A Junior respondent states, "If they are not mature enough by now, the only way they will mature is by taking care of themselves." Support for the rules, in the form of disapproval of violators, is strongest among Freshmen women, and wanes (in one case practically to the vanishing point) through the upper classes to the Seniors. The women feel that the three upper classes -- particularly the Seniors -- should be treated as mature individuals who know their own values and can take care of themselves. Enormous majorities feel that, as applied to the three upper classes, the present restrictions are excessive.

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS AND RESULTS

1a 'Women must sign out after 8 p.m. Do you consistently (practically every time) sign out?

	Fr	So	Jr	Se	Total
yes	84%	55%	60%	15%	88
no	16%	45%	40%	85%	77
number	42	42	40	41	165

1b 'Would you disapprove of a Middlebury woman who does not consistently sign out?'

	Fr	So	Jr	Se	Total
yes	28%	10%	11%	02%	20
no	72%	90%	89%	98%	137
number	39	41	35	42	157

2a 'Have you ever (in the dorm or on 'permission to leave town' slips) signed out for one comparatively 'proper' place when you knew you were going somewhere else?'

	Fr	So	Jr	Se	Total
yes	19%	39%	50%	52%	66
no	81%	61%	50%	48%	98
number	41	41	40	42	164

2b 'Would you disapprove of a Middlebury woman who signed out in this manner?'

	Fr	So	Jr	Se	Total
yes	43%	20%	13%	13%	36
no	57%	80%	87%	87%	126
number	42	40	40	40	162

3a 'Middlebury women are required to sign out before leaving the dormitory at night. Have you ever spent all or part of the night outside your dormitory without permission and without signing out?'

	Fr	So	Jr	Se	Total
yes	24%	33%	41%	54%	63
no	76%	67%	59%	46%	102
number	41	42	41	41	165

3b 'Would you disapprove of a Middlebury woman who spent the night outside the dormitory without signing out?'

	Fr	So	Jr	Se	Total
yes	57%	47%	31%	10%	57
no	43%	53%	69%	90%	102
number	39	40	39	41	159

4a 'Middlebury women are not permitted to visit men's rooms (except during specified open houses). Have you ever been illegally in a man's dormitory or fraternity room at Middlebury?'

yes	Fr	So	Jr	Se	Total
yes	15%	51%	44%	60%	71
no	85%	49%	56%	40%	95
number	41	42	41	42	166

4b 'Would you disapprove of a Middlebury woman who spent the night or a portion of the day in a man's room?'

	Fr	So	Jr	Se	Total
yes	63%	47%	33%	22%	66
no	37%	53%	67%	78%	93
number	39	40	40	40	159

'Here are four different positions that might be taken concerning the protection and supervision of the sex and social lives of women students at Middlebury College:

A) Middlebury does not provide enough protection and supervision for the sex and social lives of its women students.
B) With minor exceptions perhaps, the present amount of protection and supervision is about right.
C) Women need some protection and supervision, but the present amount is excessive.
D) Middlebury women are mature enough to have their own values and take care of themselves, and the college should make no attempt to protect and supervise their sex and social lives.

As Applied To:

	A	B	C	D	TOTAL
Freshmen	1%	61%	29%	9%	161
Sophomores	0%	24%	55%	21%	161
Juniors	0%	15%	48%	37%	161
Seniors	0%	10%	17%	73%	163
Total	2	177	243	224	646

Appendix 2

Notes on the Design of this Study

Frederic W. Swift

(Personal note: I have been closely in touch with this study since early last Fall, and have discussed with its authors, as problems came up, matters of question-wording, sampling, administration of the ballot, and analysis and interpretation of the results. Although the study is not technically perfect, it would seem to represent a valid statement of Middlebury women's attitudes and opinions in the middle of February.)

The Sample: The sample was stratified by class in order to be sure of approximately equal numbers of Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors. In most dormitories, names of girls were selected randomly by class from dormitory lists. In the Battells, however, block samples were drawn -- i.e. 100% samples of randomly selected corridors or floors. In each dormitory, one or more responsible girls administered the tests. These girls were not part of the sample.

Administration: The questionnaire was administered on February 16, 1966, in the dormitories after lockup time by the girls who had agreed to do so. The sample sought included 172 girls, just over 40 girls per class. Three girls declined to fill out the questionnaire (one of them violently) and one girl could not be located, so the actual sample used was 168 girls: 43 Seniors, 41 Juniors, 42 Sophomores, and 42 Freshmen.

Other Material: There were additional questions on the ballot that are not analysed in this report. This omission is due primarily to faulty question wording and difficulty of interpreting the results.

In general, the unreported material would appear to support the general picture given in this report with one notable exception. Most women (61%) favor the present curfew rules, with only a minority (9%) favoring extensions of one, two, or three hours. The remaining 30% favor some other system of protection, but the question did not permit finding out just what system they had in mind.